

Please Remember

The Pennsylvania State Conference meets in Pittsburg Tuesday, June 6, and continues in session until the 8. The Ohio Conference meets at Louisville Thursday, June 8, and continues over Sabbath. We have endeavored to keep the dates of these conferences before the people, and also the importance of a full representation by delegates chosen by the different local churches. The work of these conferences is always of the most important, and churches in whose district they are held should give them the most liberal patronage. A good attendance is at least one of the elements of a successful conference. This paper will reach most of our readers in these two states before Sabbath. If therefore you have not yet elected your delegates you have opportunity to do so the coming Sabbath. Let your church, Sabbath-school, young people's society, and sister's society, be represented by good working delegates, pay the expenses of your delegates, and be assured your church will be the better for it. Those on the program should make thorough preparation and go there prepared to do creditably what they are called upon to do. Apologies are out of place unless you have a very good excuse for lack of preparation. It is an injustice to the conference and to the cause you represent to go there without preparation for the work which it is yours to do. If you are unable to perform the duties imposed upon you by the program committee, so inform the committee, and do not attempt to entertain and instruct an audience of one hundred or two hundred people in the discussion of a subject to which you have given no time for preparation.

Christian Attire

Now and then some intelligent German Baptist exercises an unwonted, and what used to be a dangerous, liberty of speech concerning the "order of the church," and actually succeeds in getting his views into the columns of the *Gospel Messenger*. The latest to perform this courageous service is M. R. Bashore, of Van Dyke, Pa., and we quote below some paragraphs from his article:

This trouble of getting our members on a unity of sentiment in the matter of Christian attire has brought about in our General Conference a plan or system, and that plan is to force men into measures which to our mind are not in harmony with the principles of the gospel.

We as a church have established what we call a recognized order, and that order compels men to conform, or be rejected in our public conferences as delegates to our District or Annual Meetings.

What we want is fairness. Personal observations have taught us that men may have their dress made in the style of the world, minus a collar on their coat, and they pass by the board of credentials. Others who dress more in harmony with the principles of the gospel are rejected because of a collar on their coat. We ask in the name of common reason, is this right. We do not wish to insinuate, but cir-

cumstances have almost forced us to doubt the propriety of such a course.

We are in harmony with the principles of plainness, but when the collar, or a particular cut, is made the test whereby we are known as Christians, we may deceive ourselves.

These are fair extracts from his article, and are sufficient to show the mild agitation which is going on in the neighborhood of his conscience. He writes like an honest man, who has the courage of his convictions. We would say that he would make a very good delegate to the District meeting, or even to the Annual meeting. Perhaps here is where the yoke has galled him a little. It is quite possible that he has seen an unfit man, who had no scruples in substituting the order for fitness, advanced in preference to good men and well qualified, who nevertheless were lacking in the collar. It is neither inaccurate nor unkind to say that such things occur right along in the German Baptist church meetings. Not only is the "order" a test of qualification for a delegate, but it is the most pronounced test. What is the natural result? Good men and well qualified, but who like this Brother Bashore may have some well grounded doubts concerning either the common sense or the Gospel of this "order," are brought into competition with less qualified men who have no such doubts, or who may be quite willing to take this short and easy road to preference and honor, and forthwith "the cut" goes to the front, while brains, heart and character are relegated to the rear.

Following Bashore's article is a long editorial comment written, we judge by J. H. Moore, from which we quote a few interesting paragraphs:

We have long been of the opinion that if Christians would attire themselves plainly, as the scriptures teach, there would be no practical need of a uniform. We would need no teaching on the question of uniformity. That part would take care of itself.

That is to say, his members not having convictions or a conscience on the subject of Gospel plainness sufficiently strong to make them dress plainly, must be compelled to it by an "enforced" order of the church. As to the further question of uniformity, we wonder if Brother Moore really thinks that it is essential to Gospel plainness? We have no idea that he does for the simple reason that he is a man of some intelligence. He might have far less intelligence and common sense, and still be able to see the absurdity of such a proposition. When we say "essential to plainness," we mean as one of the constituent or fundamental principles of plainness. This nobody really believes who knows anything; but as an *expedient* by which plainness may be promoted, Brother Moore certainly urges uniformity in plain terms, as follows:

It has been found that plainness can best be maintained with the aid of a uniform that is consistent

with the Word. In fact we know of no body of people that has made a success of plainness while wholly ignoring a fixed order of attire. This consideration led to the emphasizing of the present uniform among the Brethren, the purpose being not to exalt it to the rank of a divine law, or make it a test of fellowship, but rather to employ it as an aid in carrying out the principle of plainness.

Now Elder J. H. Moore, you know as well as you know anything that in hundreds of cases this "recognized order," this "fixed order" of your church *has been made a test of fellowship*, and men and women have been turned out of the church for the simple reason, and for no other reason, that they did not conform to it. You know perfectly well, Brother Moore, that again and again this action of elders, churches, and committees, *has been ratified and sustained by the Annual Meeting*. Then why did you pen the above paragraph? If you have the courage to do so, answer this question: If a sister of good character should be expelled from a church for wearing a plain hat, and for no other reason, would the Standing Committee or the Annual Meeting upon application reverse the action of that church and restore that sister to membership? Would they?

But let us hear Brother Moore a little further:

The intention of the decisions requiring all delegates to the Annual and District meetings to dress in the order of the church, was good. It was thought that the measure would encourage uniformity, and that in the end would induce a greater degree of plainness.

"Encourage" is quite a mild word in that connection. Let us put in the right word, enforce. It would be hardly possible to bring to bear upon members out of order a stronger pressure, totally distinct from the pressure of conscience. A man doesn't like to be discredited in his own church, but this rule discredits him thoroughly. He can't be elected to any office in the church, nor to any representative office. If he is conscious of intellectual and moral fitness, every particle of manhood in him will inevitably recoil from a system which compels him to stand aside, and give place to a collar, or to no collar, as the case may be. Suppose he consents to pay the small bribe for office, what must become of his self respect? The door is wide open, however, to the kind of people who are cheerfully willing to display the prescribed credentials, and in this fact lies the infinite mischief of the system. In tendency and principle if not always in fact, manhood is placed at a discount, and hypocrisy, ignorance and incapacity is offered a premium. By its fruits we know the system. Has it not been the rock which has split the church into fragments? There is a profound spiritual beauty in simplicity of life, humility and meekness, but this "enforced order" is a far different thing, it has emanated from a different source, and has brought forth, God knows, neither the fruits of love, nor holiness.